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ABSTRACT

"The English Common Reader" was the first comprehensive and systematic exploration of how the ordinary Englishman became a reader. A social history as well as a history of the English reading public, the book has become a classic. This updated edition has a new preface and an extensive new bibliography. The book is divided into two broad sections: "The Background: 1477-1800," and "The Nineteenth Century." Chapters in the first section are: (1) "From Caxton to the Eighteenth Century"; (2) "The Eighteenth Century"; and (3) "The Time of Crisis, 1791-1800." Chapters in the second section are: (4) "The Social Background"; (5) "Religion"; (6) "The Utilitarian Spirit"; (7) "Elementary Education and Literacy"; (8) "Secondary Education"; (9) "The Mechanics' Institutes and After"; (10) "Public Libraries"; (11) "The Self-Made Reader"; (12) "The Book Trade, 1800-1850"; (13) "The Book Trade, 1851-1900"; (14) "Periodicals and Newspapers, 1800-1850"; (15) "Periodicals and Newspapers, 1851-1900"; and (16) "The Past and the Present." Appendixes with data are: "Chronology of the Mass Reading Public, 1774-1900"; "Best Sellers"; and "Periodical and Newspaper Circulation." (NKA)

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